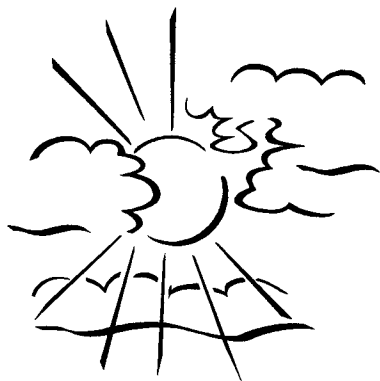


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Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

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Published May 28, 2006
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Local news briefs

Hollands may ask to change venue

Attorneys for Tim and Lisa Holland, charged with murder in the death of their 7-year-old son, Ricky, are expected to appear in court Tuesday to make several requests, including moving the trial to another county.

Two juries are expected to hear the case, but the logistics - whether there will be two separate trials, or juries will be in the courtroom at the same time - have not been decided.

The Hollands are scheduled to stand trial Sept. 25, but that date could change.

If two juries hear the trial, attorneys said it would work like this: Whenever prosecutors present evidence admissible against only one defendant, the other's jury would have to leave the courtroom.

Tim Holland, 37, and his wife, Lisa, 33, have accused each other of killing Ricky.

The Detroit News

Saturday, May 27, 2006

Reader Debate

Should Ricky's birth mom keep fourth child?

Casey Jo Caswell should not be allowed to keep this baby. When the first child was taken away, she should have started straightening herself out. Instead, this woman just kept taking up with the wrong men and having babies. I know the foster care system is seriously messed up, but how do you know if Ricky Holland's fate would've been any better with her?

Violette Pond

Detroit

The social workers need to get out of their office and check in on that baby. Instead of being so critical, how about some help? Got some extra baby clothes? May God bless them.

P. Devaughn

Cheboygan

Women need to start being responsible for their own bodies. If you are poor and have had trouble with parenting in the past, and your situation hasn't changed, maybe you need to think twice before deciding to have a child. And, if you were so irresponsible to not use birth control, after having issues in the past, tough luck on you. To have a child is a privilege, not a right, especially if you don't know how to take care of one.

Kristin Rose

Mount Clemens

No scruples or common sense and worse, Casey Jo Caswell has taken up with a child molester. She obviously isn't mentally capable to raise a child let alone take care of herself. Please take the next child away and sterilize her to stop future conceptions created out of her non-thinking impulses.

Julie Alderton

Remus

Leave her alone. The state did a pretty lousy job finding parents for Ricky Holland. If the state wants to help, then get her an education and a job.

Beverly Brennnan

Fowlerville

The state of Michigan is overstepping its bounds by deciding who can or cannot keep their babies at birth. If the state is really so concerned about Casey Jo Caswell, then give her and her husband some lessons in birth control. If you can't help this 25-year-old to get a better life, then best leave her alone rather than rip away what little dignity she has left.

Dee Macko

Misery Bay

Private charities were founded and operated by individuals who could hold people accountable for the help they received. The government cannot do that. Taxpayers are justifiably angry about the abuse.

And the government does have a right to protect the baby. But to call for mandatory sterilizations of people is a disaster in the making.

Ann Rock

Livonia

What would happen if the state just stopped throwing away money to these types of people? Maybe, just maybe, they would see the need to change.

Sandi Kanakis

Detroit

Casey Jo Caswell lacks the maturity to properly raise a child. Please, until you can afford a child, get on birth control or don't have sex.

Jen McGregor

Howell

I have three words for Casey Jo Caswell who wants a chance to raise her fourth child after the three others were removed from her care by the state: Are you joking?

Stephen Zavislak

Sterling Heights

Rather than take Casey Jo Caswell's baby away when it's born, the state needs to work with the couple closely if that is possible, for job training programs for the husband and to make sure the husband doesn't abuse the baby.

Chris Kerr

West Bloomfield

Michigan Report

May 26, 2006

COURT PROPOSES CHANGES TO CHILD ABUSE, MENTAL FITNESS TRIAL RULES

A change to court rules proposed this week by the Supreme Court would mean that witnesses to a child's claim of abuse or neglect could testify at a child protective hearing. Another change would allow people hospitalized without a trial by order of a psychiatrist or court to object at a hearing held within 10 days of the objection being made.

Under the first proposed change, any statement made by a child younger than 10 or by a developmentally disabled child younger than 18 about someone performing an act of child abuse, neglect or sexual exploitation on him or her could be entered into evidence with the testimony of a person who heard the child make the statement, even if the state was not made directly to the person testifying..

That is an expansion of the current rule that states that only the person to whom the statement was made can testify as to what was said.

The rule would also allow into defense evidence testimony from someone who heard a child deny that the acts took place.

The second rule change would expand the scope of court rules dealing with ordered hospitalization so that the rules more accurately match the procedures outlined in Michigan laws.

Those who are hospitalized for psychiatric reasons and have objections to the order must object within seven days of the order and the court must hold a hearing within 10 days where the party requesting the hospitalization must provide proof that it is needed.

Lansing State Journal

May 27, 2006

Father jailed in sex assault case

TYRONE TWP. - A 35-year-old man is jailed on \$1 million bond after being charged with nine counts of first-degree sexual assault and one count of torture, all involving his 12-year-old son. Daniel Sanford Tesen faces life in prison if convicted.

He also was charged with exhibiting obscene material to a child, truancy and third-degree child abuse, Livingston County sheriff's Detective Jim McGinty said in a news release.

Sentencing today for former teacher

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

DARRYL Q. TUCKER
THE SAGINAW NEWS

CARO -- A 27-year-old former Kingston High School English teacher who faces charges she was sexually involved with an eighth-grader was to learn her fate today.

Kristen Margrif of Mayville faced sentencing in Tuscola County Circuit Court on three counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct with a student.

That crime involves serious variations of touching someone younger than 13, or someone between 13 and 16 if living in the same house as the offender or if the offender has a position of authority.

Margrif resigned from her teaching job March 19, the same day she pleaded no contest. Such a plea means a defendant does not contest prosecutor's evidence and is willing to accept punishment.

The conviction also means that Margrif will have to register as a sex offender.

Under a plea agreement, if Margrif stays out of trouble for a year, prosecutors will reduce the charges to three counts of fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, which are misdemeanors.

Fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct involves touching or groping a victim 13 to 15 when the offender is at least 5 years older than the victim and uses force.

Prosecutors said Margrif had trysts with the male student in her car and inside a resale shop where the pupil worked in June and July.

Darryl Q. Tucker covers courts for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9686.

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

Oakland County

Man faces kidnap charges

Extradition expected to begin in June for man accused of snatching daughter 30 years ago.

Maureen Feighan / The Detroit News

A 30-year-old parental kidnapping case that made headlines across the nation earlier this month will begin to wend its way back to Michigan in June, when extradition proceedings are expected to begin against the man at the center of the case.

Eric Nielsen -- who allegedly kidnapped his daughter, Genevieve, from Oakland County when she was 2 during divorce proceedings -- was supposed to be released last week from an Arizona prison, where he was serving time for a separate felonious assault charge.

But Tom McAndrew, an assistant prosecutor with the Oakland County Prosecutor's Office, said Nielsen will now be held until June 14 on Michigan's 1976 warrant against him.

At that point, extradition proceedings to bring Nielsen back to Oakland County to face charges will be filed by the prosecutor in Arizona.

Laura Gooder, Genevieve's mother, found out on Mother's Day weekend that Genevieve is alive and living in the Phoenix area.

Now nearly 32, Genevieve was raised under a different name and told that her birth mother had died in a car accident.

Gooder said she and her daughter have spoken to each other, but neither wants to give any more information.

McAndrew said once the fugitive warrant is filed in Arizona, Nielsen -- who had been living under an alias -- can either fight extradition or sign a waiver to Michigan.

"He's already indicated apparently to an officer from Oakland County that he intends to waive extradition and come back to Michigan and face the case we have here," McAndrew said.

An attorney for Nielsen did not return a phone call Friday.

According to police, Nielsen picked his daughter up for an overnight visit from his estranged wife's home in Oakland County on May 8, 1976, and never returned.

Court papers show that Eric Nielsen filed for divorce in January of 1976.

In March of that year, Oakland Circuit Judge William Beer approved a Friend of the Court recommendation granting temporary custody to Gooder's mother, Doris Burrick.

Court filings also indicate that Nielsen allegedly threatened to kidnap his daughter.

You can reach Maureen Feighan at (248) 647-7416 or mfeighan@detnews.com

MICHIGAN BUSINESS

New approach to health care

Plans with higher deductibles and a savings account on rise

May 30, 2006

BY KATIE MERX
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER



From left, Dean, Brenton, Danielle and Micky Thurman play foosball. Dean Thurman says a health savings account has saved them money. (STEPHEN McGEE/Detroit Free Press)

So you thought those \$20 doctor's office co-pays and your \$250 deductible threw you off budget fast? That was nothing.

Get ready for the world of consumer-directed health care, where you'll pay \$1,050 to \$5,450 out of pocket before the insurance company pays anything.

Think you don't need to worry about it? Think it doesn't apply to you? Think again.

In Michigan, **General Motors Corp., Chrysler Group, Ford Motor Co.** and most of the large auto suppliers are among those companies that now offer high-deductible plans paired with health savings accounts -- HSAs -- as an option to their workers.

"If you don't know about HSAs now, you damn well better," said Dr. Joe Fortuna, cochair of the Health Focus Group for Southfield-based automotive trade organization **AIAG**. "HSAs are going to be the most prominent employer-offered health plan option in five to 10 years."

Fortuna said he believes it will be the only option for many American employees at some point in the near future.

Why? Because the premiums for traditional health insurance keep going up, and by using HSA-linked plans, employers can more precisely budget what their health tabs will be.

With traditional insurance plans, employers are basically giving employees credit cards and paying the bill for them at the end of the month, said Kate Kohn-Parrott, director of integrated health care and disability for the Chrysler Group.

With HSA-linked plans, workers are responsible for the first several thousand dollars of expenses, which makes monthly premiums much lower than with traditional plans, in which insurance companies pay a share of every doctor's office visit or trip to the emergency room.

The result is that employees will foot more of their own health-care tab and are responsible for saving to be able to do that.

Critics say the plans are just another tax-sheltering tool for the healthy and wealthy and are worried it will result in those who aren't wealthy putting off preventive care and ending up in dire straits when they haven't saved enough to pay for unexpected medical needs.

"Employers want to do the right thing by their employees and provide insurance," Fortuna said. But they can't maintain the health-benefit costs that have been rising at double-digit rates for a decade.

So many employers are considering offering the high-deductible health plans and health savings accounts. The U.S. Department of Treasury projects that between 7 million and 21 million Americans will have HSAs in four years.

The good and the bad

In most cases, the employee is responsible for building up savings in the tax-free HSA. But at Chrysler and some other companies, the employers also are contributing to the accounts. In 2006, Chrysler contributed \$500 to each individual's HSA and \$1,000 to each family's HSA. Chrysler also offers paid coverage for health screenings and annual physicals.

Employees then can use the HSA to pay for medical expenses they incur while they're paying their out-of-pocket expenses before insurance coverage kicks in.

The idea is to keep health insurance premium prices down by encouraging consumers to take more responsibility for their own health spending.

The concept is growing in popularity as employers from GM to **Starbucks** report they spend more on health care than they do on their main components, be it steel or coffee beans.

Nationwide, 3.2 million Americans -- from corporate employees to the self-employed -- have enrolled in the high-deductible health plans, up from 1 million just a year ago, reports America's Health Insurance Plans.

Dean Thurman, 38, is a financial planner and senior partner at **Financial Independence** in Bloomfield Hills. He signed up for an HSA-linked health plan as soon as the federal government signed them into law.

"It cut the premium in half and gave me all the coverage I had before plus a tax deduction," said Thurman, who lives in Clarkston with his wife and two children, ages 10 and 8. "The problem with HSAs is you have to be in decent health to get them, and they have the higher deductible."

If a child gets strep throat or someone ends up in the emergency room, the Thurmans are on the hook for the bill.

But Thurman said his family spends about 70% of what they spent on the traditional health insurance they had before and ends up with tax-free savings at the end of the year. The health insurance industry says it's seeing a rapid adoption rate and expects more employers and individuals to go in that direction.

Proponents say the high-deductible health plans can keep costs down, turn patients into more practical consumers and make health insurance available to more people. But critics worry that many low- and middle-income individuals have enrolled in high-deductible plans just to benefit from the lower premiums and aren't taking advantage of the health savings accounts that would help them pay for care when they need it. The average high-deductible premium is \$2,270 for a single person, nearly \$1,200 less than the average premium with a traditional health plan, according to the **Kaiser Family Foundation**, a nonprofit that tracks health data. The difference for family policies is even greater, with the average high-deductible premium ringing in at \$6,245, nearly \$2,000 less than the average traditional health plan premium.

Fortuna said that's a valid concern.

"Employees don't go to the doctor when they don't have paid coverage," he said. But he thinks there's a way to make the plans work. Chrysler's made a good start, he said, by offering paid coverage for health screenings and providing funds to get employees' HSAs started.

A healthy option for healthy people

Tom Rogala, an independent agent at **Custom Benefits Solutions** in Northville, said the plans make sense for people who have the means and discipline to save. His family and many of his clients pay less than half the cost of traditional insurance for high-deductible plans plus fully funded HSAs. He estimates that 90% of his high-deductible plan enrollees are funding HSAs.

Nationwide, enrollees have opened 820,000 HSAs, and administrators report that they're opening another 60,000 each month, according to **Inside Consumer-Directed Care**.

But Jason Furman, senior fellow at the **Center on Budget and Policy Priorities** in Washington, D.C., said the people most likely to use and benefit from HSAs are affluent people interested in another way to shelter income from taxes.

"It's just not going to help most families pay for their health care," Furman said.

A family with an annual income of \$30,000, two children, rent or a mortgage payment and at least one car, for instance, is very unlikely to have an extra \$5,450 to put into savings, he said.

But for someone with an income of \$100,000, it's another venue for setting aside tax-free income, Furman said.

Rogala said that's what his single, healthy brother is doing.

"My brother is an eye doctor," he said. "He pays his claims out-of-pocket so he can roll over the HSA savings for retirement.

"Who likes this?" Rogala asked. "Anybody healthy. Who doesn't like it? Anybody who's not healthy."

Contact KATIE MERX at 313-222-8762 or kmerx@freepress.com.

GLOSSARY

• Health savings accounts, or HSAs

The tax-free accounts are available to people who are enrolled in high-deductible health plans. They allow individuals to save up to \$2,700 a year and families to save up to

\$5,450 a year. The money can be used to pay for medical expenses. Like a 401(k), the money individuals save isn't tied to an employer, so it moves with employees when they change jobs. The money also can be rolled over to pay for medical expenses in future years or for retirement.

High-deductible health plan

A high-deductible health plan works like any other health plan, it just requires enrollees to spend more of their own money before insurance kicks in. Plans qualify for this classification if they have a minimum deductible of \$1,050 for a single person and \$2,100 for a family.

Consumer-directed health care

This term refers to the concept of encouraging consumers to spend health care dollars wisely by requiring them to spend more of their own money for medical services before insurance kicks in. The theory is that consumers won't seek unnecessary care if they have to spend their own money, so the rate of health care inflation will slow.

How plans compare

Sample traditional plan vs. high-deductible plan with maximum HSA savings. This is based on a healthy family of four purchased through the individual market. Father: 38, mother: 30, two children: 1 and 2.

	Traditional plan	High-deductible plan with maximum HSA savings
Premium	\$1,400	\$221.36
HSA set-aside	N/A	\$454.16
Total monthly cost	\$1,400	\$675.52
Employer contribution	\$1,000	\$500
Employee contribution	\$400	\$175.52
Deductible	\$0	\$5,450

FIND OUT MORE

- Places you can go for information about HSAs and high-deductible health plans:

- Your insurance agent

- www.hsafinder.com

- www.hsainsider.com

- www.ahip.org

- www.cbpp.org

- www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/healthcare

- www.californiahealthline.org

Make AIDS tests routine

The Saginaw News

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

A quarter-century has passed since a mysterious illness began cutting a swath through the communities of homosexuals and intravenous drug users. To date, Saginaw County has seen 172 diagnoses. Today, Michigan HIV News reports 67 people in the county living with AIDS, while 73 have the virus that causes AIDS.

With stealth, AIDS marched into the mainstream population, affecting men, women and children without regard to sexual preference.

Once a scourge that meant certain deterioration and death, AIDS and the virus that causes it, HIV, are treatable. Sophisticated and costly drug cocktails can suppress HIV from becoming potentially terminal AIDS for years. Basketball great Magic Johnson lives as an example of the strides in treatment.

Yet relative silence has led to a dangerous new trend among blacks, who account for an astounding 51 percent of new diagnoses, Newsweek reports. Black men are diagnosed at seven times the rate of white men, and black women, 20 times the rate of white women. The virus continues to ravage Africa, with millions perishing without access to proper medical attention and the expensive drugs.

The virus never rests, reinventing itself in drug-resistant strains that are increasingly appearing in new victims and evolving in those previously diagnosed.

Recently, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommended updating routine physicals for those 13 to 64 to include AIDS tests, making them as much a part of the standard work-up as a cholesterol screening. Whether doctors do so is voluntary, but insurers use those guidelines in deciding what to cover.

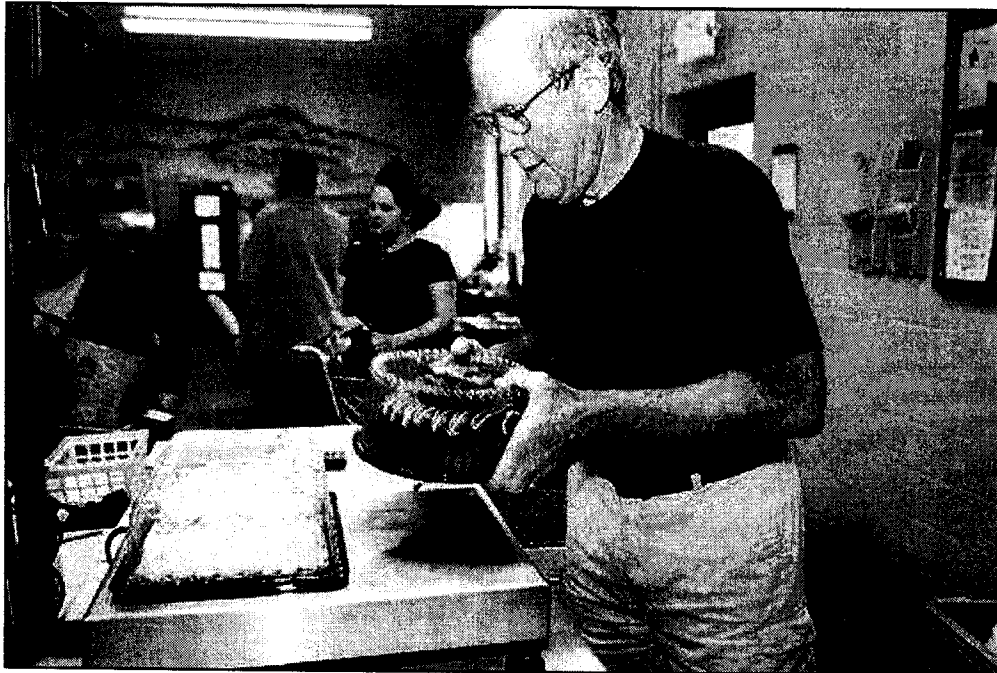
It's a welcome step.

Today, tests are routine for intravenous drug users, pregnant women and applicants for life insurance, among others. The stigma has lessened, though it still exists. If the centers approve the new guideline, a standard consent form would allow it. Patients could decline.

The Saginaw County Department of Public Health offers clinics five days a week that test for sexually transmitted diseases including HIV. Incorporating the tests in routine doctor visits could do much to fight AIDS.

AIDS is not an disease from which we can hide. Far better for those infected -- and their sexual partners who are at risk -- to know than to allow ignorance to become a death sentence. Prevention, education and knowledge remain the best defense against a perplexing and potentially deadly virus.

Tuesday, May 30, 2006



Velvet S. McNeil / The Detroit News

Gleaners Food Bank has launched a program called Client Choice Pantry that gives low-income residents a retail store-like atmosphere in which to pick up their groceries.

Food pantries look to trim down waste

Store-like atmosphere ensures clients get items they'll use, but getting there worries residents.

RoNeisha Mullen and Chrystal Johnson / The Detroit News

Catherine Stephens of Detroit visits the pantry at St. Patrick's Catholic Church once a month to pick up groceries. When she arrives, she shows identification and volunteers give her a pre-packaged bag of groceries.

"All the time there are products in the pre-pack that you can't use," said Stephens, 50, who doesn't eat tomato soup or apple sauce, but often gets them in her bag. "You try to give it away and sometimes you end up throwing it away."

"I take my (food) stamps and go to the market and buy what I like," she said.

To address concerns of patrons like Stephens, Gleaners Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan has launched Client Choice Pantry, a program that allows several small pantries in a community to merge into one central location if they choose.

The Client Choice Pantry is run like a retail store so clients can select items they like. Low-income residents are allowed to pick up 30 pounds of groceries in any combination they choose.

Shared Harvest Pantry in Howell has used this model for about five years according to the director, Julie Harris. "It's like a store," Harris said. "People can come in and choose what they want right off the shelves and it's a much more dignified way to get free food for your family."

Harris said the Client Choice Pantry also cuts down on waste because families won't get items they don't like.

But as Gleaners prepares to roll out the program in Detroit, many residents are concerned about getting to the Client Choice pantries. The merger of several neighborhood pantries into one central location may make getting much-needed groceries too difficult for patrons who don't have transportation.

"Some people are willing to travel 50 to 60 miles for food," Harris said. "The central location can be a downside because we don't have a mass-transit transportation system."

Jonathan Cannon, a father of three, walks three miles each way once a month to pick up a box and a bag of pantry items for his family. After picking up his groceries last week, Cannon sat in front of St. Patrick's, near Woodward and Mack, contemplating his journey home.

"I usually make a few stops along the way and I try to find one big bag to put all of my food in, to make it easier," said Cannon, who is concerned about the prospect of walking even farther for groceries. Detroit currently has no Client Choice Pantries.

To ease concerns for these residents, Harris said Shared Harvest takes appointments so that recipients can arrange for transportation at a convenient time.

Gleaners has more than 400 member pantries in Livingston, Oakland, Macomb, Monroe, Washtenaw and Wayne counties.

You can reach RoNeisha Mullen at (313) 222 - 2300 or rmullen@detnews.com

New tools launched

In addition to the Client Choice Pantry program, Gleaners has rolled out other new features geared at making donation and distribution of food easier.

PantryNet.org: A Web site that will allow local pantries to network with each other and market their agencies. It also allows the public to search for pantries by zip code.

Glinkos: A computer office located inside the Gleaners Southeastern warehouse that allows Gleaners members to access the Internet, create Web sites, fax, print documents, make copies, access the Gleaners inventory and place grocery orders online.

eCupboard.org: A Web site that allows the community to help raise money for food and allows shoppers to buy groceries.

Advocates: Don't forget foster kids

Tony Lascari, Midland Daily News

05/28/2006

Larry Adams doesn't want Michigan's 19,000 foster care children to be forgotten after Foster Care Month activities end on Wednesday.

The Midland resident, once in the system himself, works through the Midland County Foster Adoptive Network to help children and their families adjust to foster care and adoptive lives.

"Even though Midland is not as bad as other counties in the state, we are not immune from child neglect and abuse and we do have kids in foster care here in our county," Adams said.

Statistics from the Department of Human Services show more than 1,600 children became wards of the state in 1990, while the number grew to almost 2,980 children in 2003. That is an increase of 86 percent in 13 years.

Adams said going through the foster care system can be a challenge to children.

"For kids in the system, the constant moving and instability and the lack of being listened to is an issue," he said. "They have very little input in the system about decisions being made about them."

Adams said a mistrust of adults grows in some of the children.

"Unless that spiral stops they're in line for a troublesome life ahead of them," he said.

He hopes the network's work and a new group being organized, a Mid-Michigan Chapter of Big Family of Michigan, will aid children.

The network has meetings for both the children and for families, Adams said.

"It's a discussion of topics just letting them know there's a supportive group out there," he said.

The network meets at 6:30 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of each month at Emmanuel Baptist Church, 502 Cherry St.

Doug Lewis is executive director of the network.

"We're really creating more a sense of community than just a group," he said. "At any

time we've got 15 to 20 families involved in some level with the group."

Lewis said summer meetings might be cut back so anyone interested may want to contact the network before attending a meeting.

The meetings include either support or training, and sometimes a speaker.

"We also have a lot of social activities for families," Lewis said, including a camp attended by about 230 people last year.

"It's time for the families to kick back and enjoy spending time together," he said. "We're trying to normalize the experience for families who are going through this."

Lewis said children going through the system and adoption often see it as an abnormal experience, but there are many who go through the same process.

He said the community should be understanding of the issues the children face as they handle the extreme situations in their lives. The network challenges the children to be all they can be and does not dismiss their needs and concerns, he said.

He said being a foster parent means learning discipline, unconditional love and how to work with anger in children. He said many children revisit past issues as they go through developmental stages and the network helps support families through the process.

Anyone interested in the network can contact Adams at larry@larrya.us or Lewis at dougskids@chartermi.net or (989) 835-8738.

Mid-Michigan Chapter of Big Family of Michigan forming

Foster care advocate Larry Adams is working to organize a new group in the community to offer support to children in the foster care system.

The Mid-Michigan Chapter of Big Family of Michigan will replicate a program in the Detroit-metro area.

"It would be providing what we call 'love packs' for children entering into foster care," Adams said. "Many of them are abused, neglected and fearful. Some are being yanked out of their homes. We want to provide something to comfort them a little bit."

The packs could include hygiene items, age appropriate toys, school supplies, story books and a teddy bear.

Packages could also be created for those aging out of the system at age 18, with items such as alarm clocks, bedding, tools, towels and basic house wares.

"Most of them do not have a family to go home to and the success rate of those kids

aging out of the system does not bode very well," he said.

Other ways the organization hopes to help in the coming months include:

- * Collecting teddy bears to donate to the police, fire and social services departments to soothe children in a time of crisis,

- * Collecting suitcases and duffel bags to donate to foster care agencies so children who have to move numerous times can transport belongings "with a little bit of dignity," he said.

- * Establishing "Event Days" for children in foster care involving sports, zoos, picnics or museum days.

- * Encourage financial contributions to the program attempting to enrich the lives of children and youth in care.

Long-term goals for the organization include organizing a walk-a-thon next spring, setting up a mentor or tutor program for children in foster care, creating a speakers bureau to make presentations to organizations about resources that help young people in foster care thrive, challenging businesses to offer foster youths a life-changing opportunity of employment and more.

Adams said the most important way to help foster children is to adopt those who cannot return to their birth families.

"The lasting commitment that results from creating a new home is one that can be pursued by couples, married or unmarried, single people and partners," he said.

The network will work with the local Michigan Department of Human Services office and private agencies to recruit those who may be interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent, he said.

People interested in more information about the Mid-Michigan Chapter of Big Family of Michigan should e-mail Adams at larry@larrya.us.

May 26, 2006

APRIL JOBLESS RATES DECLINE FROM MARCH; STILL UP OVER LAST YEAR

While Michigan's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate went up in April, the unadjusted rate actually decreased in all 17 of the local labor markets, according to figures released by the Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

The difference, said DLEG analyst Yishai Castro, is that the adjusted rate takes into account typical seasonal variances, like young people looking for summer jobs and the start of construction season, which increase the amount of people who hold jobs.

"We were expecting it to go down," said Mr. Castro of April's unemployment. "The number should have gone lower."

The sharpest decline from March was seen in Northeast and Northwest Lower Michigan, where the unemployment rate fell by 1.8 and 1.1 percentage points respectively. At 9.9 percent and 7.7 percent respectively, however, both regions are well above the state unadjusted unemployment rate of 6.8 percent.

The Northeast Lower Michigan unemployment rate was the highest during the month.

Michigan's unemployment rate is still up 0.2 percentage points over the last year. The only region where the jobless rate declined in the past twelve months was the Detroit-Warren-Livonia region, which covers Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Lapeer, Livingston and St. Clair counties. The Detroit rate fell from 7 to 6.9 percent over the past year. Detroit's jobless rate was also down from March's unemployment rate of 7.6 percent.

At 7.7 percent, Saginaw County was the only region to stay unchanged. All fifteen other regions are up over the last year.

Ann Arbor had the lowest labor market rate of 4.2 percent, down from 4.6 percent in March, although up from the 4.1 percent rate in April 2005.

The lowest county jobless rate was Washtenaw County, at 4.2 percent, while the highest was Mackinac County at 16.4 percent. Wayne County had a jobless rate of 8.1 percent.

Alzheimer's patient found at bus stop

Saturday, May 27, 2006

By Barton Deiters
The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS -- An elderly Alzheimer's patient found Friday, 18 hours after he disappeared from Spectrum Health's Kent Community Campus, had managed to slip off his electronic tether and walk away, a hospital spokeswoman said.

After police and hospital employees spent Thursday night searching for 75-year-old Jessie Lee Cannon, Spectrum is trying to figure out how the man took off a "wander guard" strapped to his wrist.

Cannon, who also suffers from dementia, is among 10 percent of the Fuller Avenue NE facility's 225 long-term patients who are considered at risk of wandering off and are tracked with the device.

"We're looking at how he got it off, where he may have exited the building," Anne Veltema said. "Ordinarily, if he has that on, an alarm sounds (when he walks through an exit door.)"

Grand Rapids police Detective Erika Fannon discovered Cannon about 10 a.m. at a bus stop at the corner of Fuller Avenue and Michigan Street, not far from the hospital.

He appeared disoriented but was otherwise fine, authorities said.

During the search, police used tracking dogs. Fliers were distributed to businesses, and the man's description was dispatched to cab drivers.

A worker at Palermo Pizza, about a block north of the hospital, said he saw an increased police presence in the area. A woman dropped off Cannon's picture and asked delivery drivers to keep an eye out for him.

"Seemed kind of worried," the man said, declining to give his name.

However, an employee at Sheldon's Cleaners, the store nearest where Cannon was found, said their business was not alerted to the missing man.

Hospital staff members noticed Cannon missing when he didn't appear for dinner around 4:30 p.m. Thursday. They notified police about an hour later after looking through the premises, Veltema said. Cannon was believed to be gone for about an hour before his disappearance was noted.

Cannon now is back at the hospital, police said.

The Detroit News

May 30, 2006

Mount Clemens

Teen center escapees' cases are re-evaluated

Three teens who escaped from the Macomb Juvenile Justice Center in May 2005 along with Eric Schorling, the former Romeo High School student convicted of stabbing his ex-girlfriend, will return to Macomb Circuit Court in November to have their cases re-evaluated. Ronnie Gabrail, Matthew Crank and Jordan Danski were sentenced on charges of escape from a juvenile facility. Gabrail was released to his parents following the sentencing. Crank and Danski were returned to state juvenile justice facilities for further treatment. Schorling is in prison.

Published May 28, 2006

[From the Lansing State Journal]

McCormick: HB 5267 will help Mich.'s children of divorce

Legislation requires joint custody if both parents are found fit

The Michigan House Committee on Family and Children Services will soon consider a family law bill that will amend the Child Custody Act of 1970 to protect the loving bonds children of divorce share with both parents. Sadly, today, Michigan family courts often allow these bonds to be needlessly damaged or destroyed.

The principle behind House Bill 5267 is difficult to dispute: As long as both parents are fit and there are no extenuating circumstances, they should both share in parenting their children.

When parents cannot agree on custody arrangements, courts are instructed to order joint custody unless there is clear and convincing evidence that one of the parents is unfit, unwilling, or unable to care for his or her child. A mediator will then help the parents draft a shared parenting plan based on each parent having substantially equal time with their children.

Though the Michigan State Bar's Family Law Section, the Michigan National Organization for Women, Domestic Violence Escape Inc., and others oppose HB 5267, research establishes that joint custody is what's best for kids. According to psychologist Robert Bauserman's meta-analysis of 33 studies of children of divorce, which was published in the American Psychological Association's Journal of Family Psychology, children in shared custody settings had fewer behavior and emotional problems, higher self-esteem, better family relations, and better school performance than children in sole custody arrangements.

NOW claims HB 5267 "places the interests of parents over the child's interests." Yet when psychologist Joan Kelly examined children of divorce, she found they "express higher levels of satisfaction with joint physical custody than with sole custody arrangements," and cite the

"benefit of remaining close to both parents" as an important factor.

An Arizona State University study queried adult children of divorce, and found that more than two-thirds believed "living equal amounts of time with each parent is the best arrangement for children."

Michigan's Best Interest of the Child Test, which judges currently use to decide custody, fails to place sufficient emphasis on protecting parent-child relationships.

According to the Michigan Family Independence Agency, the most common parenting time schedule in Michigan allows children only 15 percent physical time with their noncustodial parents.

Moreover, the custody decisions based on the factors are often subjective and arbitrary. Under HB 5267, a court cannot deny requests for joint custody without stating its reasons on the record.

Both NOW and Domestic Violence Escape claim the bill will endanger abused women. Yet under HB 5267, only fit parents are eligible for joint custody - battered mothers will receive sole custody.

Unfortunately NOW, DOVE and other misguided women's advocates seem capable of recognizing only two types of divorces - ones where both spouses agree on a custody arrangement and divorces involving domestic violence. However, the overwhelming majority of breakups fit neither profile. Instead, decent, fit parents often cannot agree on custody.

In such cases, HB 5267 will ensure that children won't see one of the two people they love the most pushed to the margins of their lives.

Mike McCormick is executive director of the American Coalition for Fathers and Children in Washington, D.C.

Published May 29, 2006
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Immigration crackdown may threaten state's farms

Without migrants, prices would go up, farmers say

By Katherine Hutt Scott
State Journal correspondent

WASHINGTON - A crackdown on illegal immigration adopted by the U.S. House last December would put one-third of Michigan's cherry growers and other specialty crop farmers out of business, the Michigan Farm Bureau estimates.

Bureau officials said those farmers wouldn't have enough workers if the House bill became law.

They support a softer approach passed by the Senate on Thursday that would combine border-security measures with offering a pathway to citizenship for some illegal immigrants and a program allowing guest workers.

"If you talk to Michigan farmers, this is one of the biggest issues on their mind today, how they are going to get their crop harvested," said Megan Wheaton, a lobbyist for the Farm Bureau. "The domestic work force isn't there."

Even if farmers find people to pick their crops, they would have to pay higher wages, which would increase the cost of fruits and vegetables for consumers, said state Sen. Valde Garcia, R-Howell.

The House bill also would make an illegal presence in this country a criminal offense. That would force many illegal immigrants to leave the country, including families with children, said Garcia, whose parents and grandparents were migrant workers.

"I would hope as Americans we would have more compassion," Garcia said.

About 60,000 people work on Michigan farms, and the U.S. Department of Labor estimates that half of farm workers nationwide

could be in the U.S. illegally, Wheaton said.

The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that between 100,000 and 150,000 people are in Michigan illegally.

It's unclear how the House and Senate's two very different approaches to immigration will be reconciled by negotiators, which must happen before any change becomes law.

The four Republican House members representing mid-Michigan all voted for the House bill when it passed in December. The state's two Democratic senators split on the Senate bill.

Reps. Joe Schwarz, Dave Camp and Vern Ehlers said last week they would be willing to consider measures that would allow migrants to continue to work on the state's farms. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, didn't respond to requests for comment.

Schwarz, R-Battle Creek, said he supported the House bill because America needs to tighten its borders and the bill motivated the Senate to address the issue.

He predicted that the two chambers would reach agreement.

"A compromise on immigration is going to have to include some sort of systematic look at how long people have been here, what they have been doing, what's their tax status, what's their status with the law," Schwarz said.

Camp, of Midland, wants a compromise to address border security first, but he would consider giving temporary work visas to illegal immigrants, spokesman Sage Eastman said.

Ehlers, of Grand Rapids, said he supported the House bill because America needs less porous borders, but he said he is sensitive to the need for labor by farms, hotels and restaurants for low-wage workers.

"I have supported legislation intended to persuade more aliens to pursue the legal channels of immigration rather than enter and remain here illegally," he said in a statement.

U.S. Sen. Carl Levin supported the Senate bill, saying in a floor speech, "We need to protect our borders and look out for American workers, and we also need a responsible way to meet the need for temporary workers." He said that the bill bars employers from hiring

guest workers in areas with a high unemployment rate.

But U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow voted against the bill, saying it would open the nation's borders to hundreds of thousands of new guest workers every year and not do enough to protect American workers.

"Importing cheap foreign labor is wrong for Michigan," she said in a statement.

Contact Katherine Hutt Scott at kscott@gns.gannett.com.

Work to bring permanent housing to the community's homeless

Kalamazoo Gazette

Monday, May 29, 2006

By Shaun Hittle

In a May 8 Viewpoint article, "None in community need be hungry, homeless unless they choose," board members of the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission, a local homeless shelter, assert that those who are homeless in Kalamazoo are homeless because of their own choice.

In the article, the board of the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission states that the reason some people in the area are not in shelters is because they do "not want to follow the rules of the shelters like the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission which would have received them with open arms if they would have been willing to abide by the simple rules..." The article further goes on to discuss media coverage of those who claim inadequate service and mistreatment by area shelters.

While it should be recognized that the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission has been providing valuable services to the disadvantaged populations of Kalamazoo for many years, it is unfortunate that the Mission chooses to blame the homeless in Kalamazoo for being unable or unwilling to follow shelter rules without looking at the reasons why this is.

I recognize that rules and policies are needed to keep shelters safe and manageable, and Open Door/Next Door does have to ask residents to leave when rules are violated. But, instead of placing blame and invoking criticism, the challenge of those homeless who have difficulty following shelter guidelines should be seen as a need that area organizations (including Open Door/Next Door) have been unable to meet so far.

In addition, we need to examine the reasons why some in the community chose not to utilize the services of area shelters. Again, instead of criticizing these people, we need to realize that shelters are not a solution to homelessness and area groups who organize for better conditions in the human services are saying that they deserve better; and they do.

Shelters such as the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission and Open Door/Next Door do not end homelessness for those we serve; we simply provide temporary housing for the homeless. True homelessness ends when someone has safe, affordable and permanent housing of their own. Unless this key distinction is made, our efforts will continue to provide temporary solutions to a solvable societal issue.

I applaud the efforts of those who work toward solutions even though this will sometimes mean that agencies like ours will be criticized for their lack of comprehensiveness and effectiveness. The frustration expressed by area homeless activists should be viewed as a call to action to organizations and local governments to find ways to provide permanent housing for all Kalamazoo citizens.

Shaun Hittle is a board member
of Open Door/Next Door and resides
in Kalamazoo.

Shelter worker faces jail after refusing police entry

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

By TOM GILCHRIST
BAY CITY TIMES WRITER

BAD AXE - Brenda L. Brooks wasn't about to let some visitor inside Huron County's shelter for victims of domestic violence.

Even if it was plainclothes Bad Axe Police Department Lt. David W. Rothe, responding to a report of a woman with a back injury at the Huron County SafePlace on the morning of May 8.

Rothe said Brooks, a 48-year-old shift worker at the shelter, repeatedly refused him entrance to the shelter at 143 W. Soper Road. The officer arrested her for the alleged unfriendly attitude.

Brooks, of Bad Axe, could face a maximum of two years in prison and a \$2,000 fine if convicted of either of two counts of resisting and obstructing police.

"She's not a militant, not a man-hater or a cop-hater. She was just doing her job and following procedure," said David B. Herrington, the Bad Axe attorney representing Brooks.

Before a visitor gets in the shelter, Herrington said, procedure requires Brooks to notify her boss of the person's arrival, to learn the purpose for the visit and to let the shelter resident know of her visitor's arrival.

"(Rothe) didn't have any medical equipment with him, he was very demanding and my client refused to let him come into the building, at which point he became very angry," Herrington said.

Rothe denies getting mad.

"The only time I ever touched (Brooks) was when I put the handcuffs on her," Rothe said.

And it was Brooks, police and Herrington agree, who called 911 to ask for medical help for a person with a back injury at the shelter.

Rothe said that on the morning of the reported injury, he learned from paramedic Jim Horiski that the "back injury" actually was a drug overdose suffered by a 35-year-old female resident of the SafePlace.

As a result, officers opened a police investigation, Rothe said.

"What did she overdose on?" Rothe said. "Was it a suicide attempt or was it accidental? Did she get the drugs from the Safehouse or did she bring them in?"

"She's in a controlled environment, so how did she get this? Did she drink Lysol, or was it a controlled substance?"

Herrington said he found no evidence of a crime to prompt police to start an investigation.

The SafePlace opened early this year, featuring about 16 beds for abused women and children.

Rothe said law-enforcement officials have had trouble gaining access to the shelter at least five times while trying to serve subpoenas or interview abuse victims.

Herrington, however, questioned why Rothe would arrive so quickly for a reported back injury.

"It's not unreasonable to suggest he was waiting to show up to pick a fight," Herrington said. "When Officer Rothe showed up, he was on the muscle, and aware of previous police officer complaints about not being welcomed with open arms."

Rothe said he came to the SafePlace simply to try to aid to an injured person there.

"We respond to any ambulance run in the city, when we're out on the road," Rothe said. "How would you like to be sitting in your home, injured and needing help, and have the police just drive on by?"

Rothe said that after Brooks refused to give him information about the injured woman, he left and returned about an hour later with Huron County Assistant Prosecutor Elizabeth V. Weisenbach, one of the directors overseeing the SafePlace.

Although Weisenbach insisted Brooks let Rothe inside, Brooks still refused, prompting her arrest, police said.

The overdose victim survived, but "spent several days in intensive care, which makes the situation even worse," Rothe said.

Huron County Prosecutor Mark J. Gaertner said the woman overdosed on prescription drugs, but - due to lack of cooperation by the shelter - police and medical personnel lost valuable time diagnosing and treating the victim.

"During a prescription drug overdose, the first 30 to 40 minutes are the most critical when that person mixes drugs or takes too much, because that's when the body starts to react," Gaertner said.

"We lost those 30 to 40 minutes, in this situation."

Bad Axe Police Chief John L. Bodis said police are investigating whether to charge the overdose victim with a crime.

Brooks continues working at the shelter and remains free awaiting a June 8 hearing on the evidence.

"She did not refuse a lawful police command," Herrington said. "There was no active resistance toward the police officer whatsoever."

Gaertner, however, said SafePlace workers "are not their own little government over there - they're not the Vatican City, and not their own little principality."

One cent disgrace

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

IMLAY CITY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, May 28, 2006

JOURNAL READER

Of the \$1,662.08 Consumers bill that Jacqueline Williams ran up, approximately one third each was paid by the Salvation Army, the taxpayers and Consumers Energy Co. In the end, she was required to pay one cent. She went to the press with her story of woe.

For your paper to make a mockery of the generosity of everyone concerned is a total disgrace. No one with an ounce of self respect would have had the intestinal fortitude to complain about not getting the last penny of such a large donation. Hopefully, this irresponsible reporting will not affect donations that our local charities get from the community.

Earl Gass

Imlay City

L55
5/28

IN BRIEF

10 Testimony in Unger case shifts to wooden railing

BEULAH — The wooden railing on a boathouse deck at a northern Michigan resort where a woman was killed was sturdy, an investigator testified Friday.

Prosecutors contend Florence Unger, 37, of Huntington Woods, was pushed or fell over the boathouse railing to a concrete pad 12 feet below, then was dragged, alive



F. Unger

but unconscious, into Lower Herring Lake's shallow edge, where she drowned. Her body was found the morning of Oct. 25, 2003.

Mark Unger, 45, has pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder and says his wife's death was accidental.

Tesha Hanks, Florence Unger's hairdresser for 10 years, also testified Friday, the Detroit Free Press reported. Hanks said she spoke by phone with Mark Unger the day after the victim's body was found. She said he began crying and went on to tell her how his wife died, but she said it was a different story than the one he told the police.

This Week APHSA in Washington

For the week ending 5/26/2006, Vol. XXVII, No. 14

- House Passes Interstate Compact Bill
 - Congressional Hearing Reviews Child Protective Services
 - House Passes Agriculture Appropriations Bill
 - House Health Panel Approves Health Information Technology Legislation
 - Hearing Examines Pharmacists' Experience with Part D
 - House Republicans Warn Against Administrative Approach to Medicaid Cuts
 - Medicaid Commission Meets to Discuss Long-Term Care and Eligibility Reform
 - ACF Announces Reorganization of Child Care Bureau and Head Start Bureau
 - CBO Updates Report on Avian Flu Preparedness
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House Passes Interstate Compact Bill

On May 24, the House of Representatives passed the Safe and Timely Interstate Placement of Foster Children Act of 2006 (H.R. 5403) by voice vote. The bill creates new rules for the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC). In contrast to a similar bill passed by the House last year, H.R. 5403 contains neither a provision to eliminate the opt-out of background checks nor a requirement to exclude private adoptions from the revised ICPC. Some key provisions include a new Title IV-E state plan requirement to conduct, complete, and report the results of a home study within 60 days of a request; a potential 15-day extension (which expires in September 2008) to the time limit if it can be documented that circumstances beyond state control were involved; a \$1,500 incentive for home studies completed within 30 days; and a new requirement that ongoing visitation must occur every six months in interstate cases. The amendments in this legislation apply to payments made under Titles IV-B and IV-E beginning on October 1, 2006, and therefore compliance with all the bill's provisions could affect Title IV-E and IV-B funding. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Tom DeLay (R-Texas) and co-sponsored by Reps. Bill Thomas (R-Calif.), Wally Herger (R-Calif.), Dave Camp (R-Mich.), Phil English (R-Pa.), Melissa Hart (R-Pa.), Sam Johnson (R-Texas), Dennis Cardoza (D-Calif.), Robert Cramer (D-Ala.), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), and Pete Stark (D-Calif.). The text is available at <http://thomas.loc.gov>.

Congressional Hearing Reviews Child Protective Services

On May 23, the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources held a hearing on proposals to improve child protective services. The hearing focused on reauthorization of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program. Members of Congress present at the hearing included subcommittee Chairman Wally Herger; Ranking Member Jim McDermott (D-Wash.); and Reps. Nancy Johnson (R-Conn.), Bob Beauprez (R-Colo.), and Pete Stark. Cari DeSantis, secretary of the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth, and Their Families, testified on behalf of APHSA and its affiliate, the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators. Other panelists included staff from the Government Accountability Office, Casey Family Programs, National Indian Child Welfare Association, Child Welfare League of America, and the National Council for

Adoption. Subcommittee members made comments or asked questions covering an array of issues, including concerns with administrative claims, methamphetamine effects on child welfare, services provided to substantiated child maltreatment cases, and recently awarded child welfare waiver demonstration projects. Copies of testimony are available at <http://waysandmeans.house.gov/hearings.asp?formmode=detail&hearing=482&comm=2>.

House Passes Agriculture Appropriations Bill

On May 23, the House passed the fiscal year 2007 Agriculture Appropriations bill, H.R. 5384, by a vote of 378-46. An amendment that would have denied matching funds to states implementing certain Food Stamp Program (FSP) operational changes was withdrawn after a point of order was raised against it. The amendment was introduced by Rep. Joe Baca (D-Calif.) and supported by Reps. Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas) and Al Green (D-Texas). It would have denied funds to any state that implemented operational changes “designed to increase the total percentage of applications submitted by mail, by telephone, and on-line to more than 20 percent” of the state’s total applications, unless the state could demonstrate that access for certain groups had not been curtailed or had violated certain laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. The amendment occasioned floor debate that criticized the recent eligibility redesign changes implemented in Texas. The House did pass by 266-153 an amendment by Rep. Scott Garrett (R-N.J.) to prohibit any food stamp funds from being spent “in contravention of section 213a of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1183a).” This language would spotlight enforcement of existing law, under which sponsors of immigrants are responsible for supporting them until they become citizens and must reimburse the government for any benefits the immigrants receive under means-tested programs. Garrett proposed the same amendment last year, but it was defeated. It passed this year with the votes of 216 Republicans and 50 Democrats. Rep. Timothy Johnson (R-Ill.) had prepared an amendment, later withdrawn, that would have directed a study by the National Academy of Sciences on the dietary value of foods that can be purchased with food stamps. According to Johnson’s staff, he is concerned about the obesity issue and believed the study could help determine the feasibility of an incentive program to encourage FSP recipients to buy healthy foods. The Senate has not yet acted on its version of the FY 2007 Agriculture Appropriations bill.

House Health Panel Approves Health Information Technology Legislation

On May 24, the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee approved H.R. 4157, the Health Information Technology Promotion Act of 2006, by a vote of 8–5. The bill, sponsored by subcommittee Chair Nancy Johnson (R-Conn.), promotes the use of health information technology (HIT) and establishes national standards on privacy and implementation of electronic health records. The bill would codify the Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and create a government-sponsored board that would recommend national standards for medical data storage. The bill requires the secretary of HHS to develop a strategic plan to coordinate implementation efforts for HIT standards, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) transaction standards, and new coding systems. The plan must address how activities will be coordinated between the Office of the National Coordinator for HIT, the American Health Information Community, the Office of Electronic Standards and Security, and the National Committee for Vital Health Statistics. The secretary of HHS also must conduct a study of state laws and regulations and report to Congress within 18 months after the bill is enacted regarding the security and confidentiality of individually identifiable health information. This relates to the electronic exchange of clinical information among states, federal government, and private entities. The text is available online at www.thomas.loc.gov.

Hearing Examines Pharmacists’ Experience with Part D

On May 23, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a hearing on “The Federal Government and Pharmacists,” which reviewed pharmacists’ experience with the Medicare Part D program. One representative from the pharmacists’ group reported delayed payments of up to 45 days under Part D.

However, according to Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) officials, a recent CMS survey found that as many as 18 of the leading 20 prescription drug plans (which account for 90 percent of beneficiaries' drug coverage) pay pharmacy claims on a 15-day billing cycle. Also during the hearing, CMS Deputy Administrator Leslie Norwalk announced the agency's revised policy on co-branding for Part D plans. In a move that officials hope will reduce confusion among beneficiaries, CMS has told insurers sponsoring drug plans under Part D that they will not be allowed to co-brand with other organizations for 2007 and future plan years. Testimony from the hearing is available at <http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/Hearings/05232006hearing1905/hearing.htm>.

House Republicans Warn Against Administrative Approach to Medicaid Cuts

House Republicans Warn Against Administrative Approach to Medicaid Cuts

Medicaid Commission Meets to Discuss Long-Term Care and Eligibility Reform

Last week, the Medicaid Commission met in Dallas for a discussion on long-term care and eligibility reform. Commission members heard from a number of states and were briefed on a number of options for reform in long-term care, including splitting the long-term care portion into two categories, chronic and acute care; block-granting the program; and changing the eligibility criteria so that individuals are classified into the program based on their health status rather than their disease. Commission members outlined the "roadmap" for the rest of their tenure, with the culmination being the final report that the commission will deliver to HHS Secretary Leavitt at the end of December. There will be a series of recommendations that the commission will vote on. Outside organizations and states are urged to send their recommendations to the commission for consideration. The commission hopes to have all recommendations for this area by June 21, 2006. The next commission meeting will focus on quality and information technology, and will be held July 11-12, 2006. All proposals to improve quality and information technology will be due to the commission by August 14. The last area that the commission will review is overall program administration, and recommendations for this area should be submitted by September 22. The commission will vote on the complete series of recommendations either November 8-9 or November 16-17.

ACF Announces Reorganization of Child Care Bureau and Head Start Bureau

On May 23, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced the reorganization of the Child Care Bureau in which the bureau will be moved into the Office of Family Assistance (OFA), which oversees the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program. The reorganization will also rename the Head Start Bureau as the Office of Head Start and elevate it to report directly to the assistant secretary of ACF. Both the Child Care Bureau and the Head Start Bureau are currently divisions within the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (ACYF). The announcement states that the reorganization will transfer the Child Care Bureau "in its entirety and with its current organizational structure" from ACYF to OFA. The announcement does not include a request for comments. The notice was published in the May 23, 2006, Federal Register (71 FR 29649-29650), and is available online at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>.

CBO Updates Report on Avian Flu Preparedness

On May 22, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released an updated version of its December 2005 assessment of the possible macroeconomic effects of an avian flu pandemic, as well as the nation's level of preparedness. The report was sent to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) and Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.), chair of the Budget Committee. It cites the release of a number of studies that have analyzed the economic impact of a pandemic, among them a study finding that the effect would likely be milder than the 5 percent decline in gross domestic product that CBO originally estimated. The report also addresses the nation's preparedness policy and the readiness of state and local governments, as well as public health systems. The report is available at <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/72xx/doc7214/05-22-Avian%20Flu.pdf>.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Department of Human Services Call Center Contract Brings Jobs Home to Michigan, Saves Taxpayers Money

May 30, 2006

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm announced today that the Michigan Department of Human Services is now using Affiliated Computer Services, Inc. (ACS) electronic benefit transfer services disburse benefits to its clients. The \$48 million electronic benefit transfer contract was awarded to ACS and it includes a partnership that has created 26 jobs in Oscoda, with the potential to create additional jobs within one year.

"Our efforts to ensure that we are spending every dollar efficiently and, whenever possible, here in Michigan resulted in this contract going to a Michigan company," Granholm said. "We are not only saving money, but creating new jobs as well."

Crusecom Technology Consultants, based in Oscoda, is subcontracting with ACS to provide call center support for an estimated 75,000 calls per month regarding DHS's assistance programs. Prior to this change, calls were routed to call centers in Florida, Mexico and India. In addition to creating new jobs in Michigan, this new contract will save taxpayers \$25.3 million over five years.

"This is great news for Michigan," Granholm said. "I am thrilled that jobs have been created for a community in need. I hope other entrepreneurs and business owners in Michigan see this as an example of the great opportunities that exist for them right here at home."

In 2004, Granholm signed two executive directives that gave preference to Michigan-based job providers in the state government contracting process and, for the first time, required the Department of Management and Budget to consider whether or not a bidder is engaged in exporting jobs or using an offshore tax shelter when determining if a bidder's proposal provides the best overall value to the state. Since the inception of the *Buy Michigan First* program, almost 86 percent of state contract dollars have been spent with Michigan firms.

More than 1.1 million people in Michigan depend upon cash, food and emergency benefits each month to help feed their children and make ends meet. The change in contractors will be transparent to both clients and retailers, with the ACS system using the same Michigan Bridge Card that is currently in use by DHS clients.

"These benefits are a critical support to many Michigan vulnerable senior citizens, families and children," Marianne Udow, director of the Michigan Department of Human Services, said. "Michigan's businesses profit from these benefits as well, especially during slow economic times. Last year, over \$896 million was spent on food at Michigan retailers by way of the Food Assistance program. Food benefits help keep businesses open in areas where they might not otherwise make it."

For more information about state and federal assistance benefits, visit the Department of Human Services Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.